Public Policy Institute of California

California Counts
POPULATION TRENDS AND PROFILES

Hans P. Johnson, editor

Volume 4 Number 3 • February 2003

Maternity Before Maturity

Teen Birth Rates in California

By Hans P. Johnson

Summary

Teenage pregnancy and childbearing are considered serious social problems. In this report, we examine trends and patterns in teen birth rates in California. Examining the history of teen birth rates, and their variations across demographic groups and regions, should help inform policy discussions surrounding teen pregnancy and birth.

We find that teen birth rates, after increasing in the 1980s, have fallen dramatically in California over the past decade. In 1991, California's teen birth rates were among the highest in the nation; by 2000, the state's rates were below the national average. This decline might have more to do with the state's demography than with more effective intervention programs in California than in other states. Much of the decline in teen birth rates in California can be attributed to declines among foreign-born Latinas, although they still have very high rates of teen childbirth. Two of every three babies born to teens in California are born to Latinas. Teen birth rates for whites and Asians in California, already low compared to other groups, also declined during the 1990s.

There are substantial variations in teen birth rates across California's regions and counties. Teen birth rates in the San Joaquin Valley are more than twice as high as those in the Bay Area. Only some of this variation can be explained by differences in the demographic composition of the teen population. For example, Hispanic teen birth rates are over 50 percent higher in the San Joaquin Valley than in the North Coast and Mountain region, African American teen birth rates are over twice as high in the San Joaquin Valley as in the Central Coast, and white teen birth rates are almost three times higher in the San Joaquin Valley than in the Bay Area.

Increasingly, teen childbearing has taken place outside of marriage. In 2000, 78 percent of all teen mothers in California had never been married, compared to 45 percent in 1980.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Teen birth rates have fallen dramatically in California over the past decade.

Fathers responsible for these births tend to be substantially older than the mothers—a majority are at least 21 years of age.

These findings suggest that programs to reduce teen pregnancy and childbearing in California should consider cultural contexts, regional differences, and historical patterns and target interventions accordingly. Strategies to reduce teen pregnancy and childbearing should consider in particular those groups and locales with higher birth rates.

Hans P. Johnson is a research fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California. Views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of PPIC. *The author acknowledges the research assistance of Sonya Tafoya and the helpful comments of Laura Hill, Tia Martinez, Rebecca Maynard, Michael Wald, and Deborah Reed. The Hewlett Foundation generously provided support for this research.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Context

Teenage pregnancy and birth are regarded as serious social problems in the United States, and considerable public and private efforts are devoted to reducing teen pregnancy and childbearing. Public policies to accomplish this are often controversial and have been debated for decades. Currently, federal programs that provide funding to states emphasize personal responsibility and abstinence.[1] In California, state and local governments as well as private organizations are committed to limiting teen pregnancy and birth. Substantial declines in teen fertility in the 1990s have been cited as proof that programs to reduce teen pregnancy are working, although there is an absence of strong evidence on the efficacy of such programs (DiCenso et al., 2002).[2]

Teen births are discouraged primarily because of the effect of the birth on the future well-being of the mother and a concern that the mother will be unable to meet the financial and emotional needs of her baby. The concern is shared by teen mothers themselves. The majority of teen pregnancies and births are unintended.[3] Among researchers and others concerned with teen pregnancy and childbearing, the conventional wisdom has long been that teen childbearing leads to poor life outcomes for mother and child. Studies that show poor outcomes for teen mothers suggest that such mothers are less likely to finish school, have higher poverty rates, and have greater dependence on public assistance—outcomes that are at least partly attributable to becoming pregnant and giving birth. Recent studies, however, have questioned whether teen mothers really are worse off than they would have been without becoming pregnant and giving birth, arguing instead that those teens who do bear children would have been likely to drop out of school and be in poverty, even if they had not had a child as a teen.[4]

The research is more consistent in suggesting that there are significant adverse consequences of being raised by a teen mother. Controlling for differences in the backgrounds of the mothers, children of teen mothers are less healthy, more likely to be abused, and more likely to be placed in foster care than other children. As adults, these children are less educated, more impoverished, and more likely to engage in criminal activity (Maynard, 1997).

In this issue of *California Counts*, we develop and analyze trends in teen birth rates in California. With the release of some 2000 Census data, now is a good time to consider how California has fared in reducing teen birth rates across its diverse population. We examine birth rates over the last several decades for the state's largest racial and ethnic groups, considering whether foreign-born teens have higher fertility than U.S.-born teens. Data and methods used to estimate teen birth rates are described in the text box on the following page.

Trends over Time

Over the past 30 years, California's teen birth rates have undergone several distinct periods of change: They declined from the early 1970s to the mid-1970s, changed little from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, increased dramatically from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, and then declined sharply from the early 1990s to 2001. California's teen birth rates are now at a historic low, having declined below the previous lows recorded in the mid-1980s (Figure 1). The number of teen births in California has declined as well, from almost 72,000 in 1991 to about 53,000 in 2001.[5] Declines in births to unmarried teens have not been as dramatic.[6]

Among the 50 states, California was not alone in experiencing a decline in teen birth rates during the 1990s. In California and in the rest of the nation, teen birth rates peaked in 1991. Since then, rates have declined to record lows in many states. In California, rates declined by 36 percent between 1991 and 2000—more than in any other state except Vermont. In

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Measuring Teen Birth Rates

Most of the birth rates presented in this issue are the annual number of births to teens per 1,000 female teens ages 15 through 19. The birth rates, and thus the number of births and base populations, are estimated separately by race/ethnicity, nativity, and single year of age. The number of births is derived from vital statistics data files obtained from the California Department of Health Services (DHS). Annual estimates of the underlying population by racial and ethnic groups, with some adjustments, come from the California Department of Finance (DOF). In particular, we adjust the DOF population estimates and projections by age, gender, and race/ethnicity to be consistent with 2000 Census data. People of mixed race are allocated to only one race on a proportional basis (for example, a person who identifies as both white and African American adds half to the white population and half to the African American population). No adjustments are made for Census undercount, leading to a slight overstatement of birth rates. We estimate annual foreign-born proportions for teens by race/ethnicity using decennial Censuses, Current Population Surveys, and 2000 Census Supplementary Survey data. The product of those proportions and the base populations provides estimates of U.S.-born and foreign-born teens. Estimates of the teen birth rates in this report differ from those developed by the California Department of Health Services because of different base populations.

Some of the information presented here is based solely on decennial Censuses. The Censuses provide information on whether or not a female (age 15 and over) has had a baby at some point in her life. Table 1 and Figure 7 are based on tabulations of Public Use Microdata Series files from the decennial Censuses. Similar files are not yet available from the 2000 Census, although we do supplement the information in Table 1 with data from the 2000 Census Supplementary Survey. Census and survey data are used partly because information on marital status was not collected by DHS until 1997.

1991, California's teen birth rates were substantially higher than the national average, and the state ranked 11th highest among the 50 states (tied with South Carolina). By 2000, California's rates were below the national average, and the state ranked 21st (Figure 2).

Marital Status

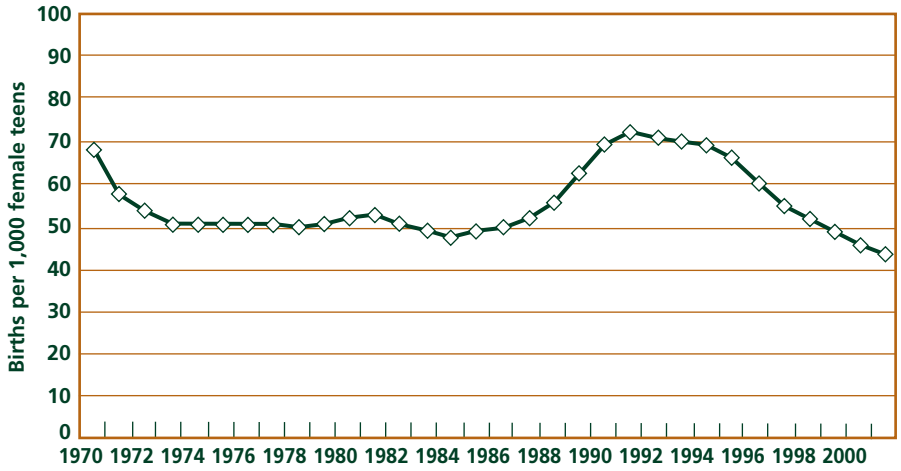
Increasingly, teen childbearing has become divorced from marriage. In California in 1970, only 29 percent of teen mothers were unmarried. By 1990, that percentage had increased to 63 percent, and by 2000 it was about 78 percent.[7] Among younger teens, marriage has become extremely uncommon (Table 1).

Marriage is uncommon for teen mothers of most, although not all, racial and ethnic groups. Among African American teens giving birth in 1999, over 90 percent were unmarried, compared to 71 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander teens (Table 2). Marriage rates are relatively high for some Asian subgroups. In 1997, for example, almost half of Hmong and Mien teen mothers were married when they gave birth, and a majority (60 percent) of older (ages 18 and 19) Hmong and Mien teens were married.

Overall, U.S.-born teen mothers are more likely to be unmarried than are foreign-born teen mothers (Table 3). In general, the propor-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Figure 1. Teen Birth Rates in California, 1970–2001



Source: Author's calculations based on California vital statistics records and population estimates consistent with the 2000 Census.
Note: Rates are for teens ages 15 through 19.

Most of the partners of teen mothers are not teenagers themselves.

tion of births to unmarried mothers was lowest among older foreign-born teens. But even for older foreign-born teens, except for whites, the majority of births are to unmarried mothers. Among foreign-born whites—a relatively small group with low birth rates—only one of every three births was to an unmarried mother in 1997. For the group with the highest teen birth rates—foreign-born Latinas—over half (57 percent) of births to 18- and 19-year-olds were to unmarried mothers.

Fathers of Children Born to Teens

Fathers of children born to teens are on average almost four years older than the teen mothers. Most of the partners of teen mothers are not teenagers themselves, with a slight majority 21 years of age or older. These figures vary by age of the mother, ethnicity, nativity, and marital status (Table 4). In particular, foreign-born teen mothers have partners who are almost five years older, compared to only three years older for U.S.-born teen mothers. Married teens have older partners than unmarried teens. White foreign-born teen mothers have the largest age difference, with the fathers of their children averaging six years older (not shown). Among racial and ethnic groups, African American teen mothers are closest in age to their partners.

A substantial share of teen births are a result of statutory rape. In 1997 in California, one of every four children born to a teenage mother had a father who met one of three criminal categories for statutory rape. Statutory rape applies in cases where the victim is unmarried and younger than 18 years of age. The most serious offense—cases where the father is at least 21 years of age and the mother is 15 or younger—is uncommon, with only 1 percent of teen births occurring to unmarried mothers and fathers of such disparate ages. Still, among unmarried 15-year-olds in 1997, almost one of every seven births includes a father who is at least 21 years of age. The next most serious offense, also prosecutable as either a misdemeanor or a felony, occurs in cases where the father is at least

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

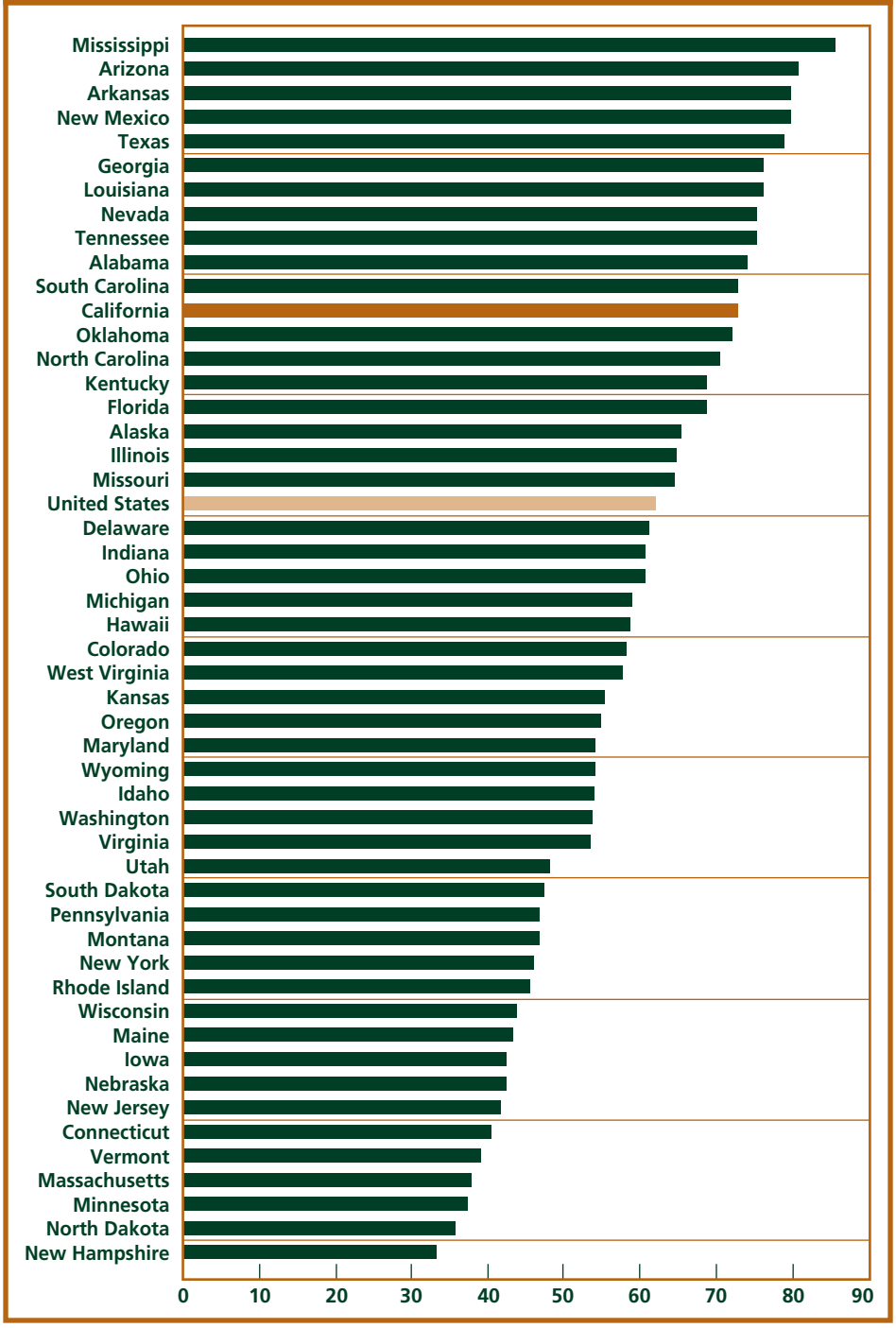
four years older than the unmarried mother; one of every ten teen births falls in this category. Among 15- to 17-year-olds, one of every four births meets the criterion for this second most serious case of statutory rape. The most common category of statutory rape occurs when the father is within three years of age of an unmarried teen mother. Civil penalties also apply, with four categories of increasing severity.

Teen Birth Rates by Age

Younger teens have fewer births and lower birth rates than older teens. Two of every three births to teens in 2000 were to 18- or 19-year-olds; 19-year-olds had birth rates about eight times higher than 15-year-olds. Even though older teens are more likely to be married, they also account for the majority of births to unmarried teens (almost 60 percent in 1997).

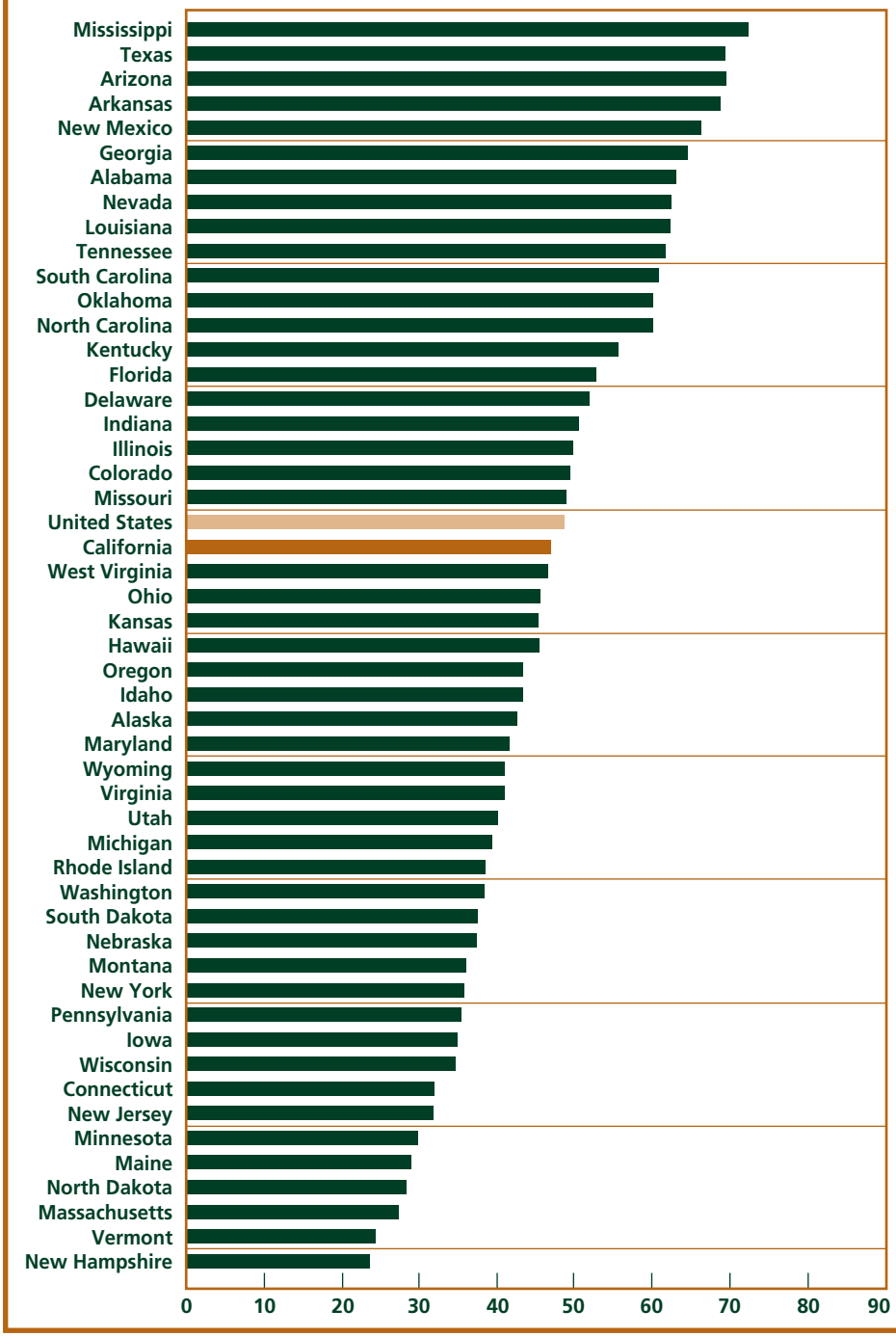
Teen birth rates have declined for younger as well as older teens in the state (Figure 3). The general pattern of change in teen birth rates is similar for each age, with increases in the rates from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s and declines since then. In absolute terms, increases and subsequent declines in teen birth rates were largest for older teens. In relative

Figure 2a. Teen Birth Rates by State, 1991 (births per 1,000 female teens, ages 15–19)



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Figure 2b. Teen Birth Rates by State, 2000 (births per 1,000 female teens, ages 15–19)



terms, declines in the 1990s have been greatest for the youngest teens, although earlier increases in the late 1980s were larger for younger teens than for older teens. Between 1991 and 2000, birth rates for teens ages 15 through 17 declined 43 percent, and rates for teens ages 18 and 19 declined 29 percent. In 1991, when teen birth rates were at their highest, one of every eight 19-year-olds in California gave birth, compared to one of every 11 in 2000; among 15-year-olds, one of every 47 gave birth in 1991 compared to one of every 88 in 2000.

Teen Birth Rates by Nativity in California

Since the mid-1970s, foreign-born teens have had much higher birth rates than U.S.-born teens. In fact, throughout the 1990s and into 2001, foreign-born teen birth rates were about twice as high as those of U.S.-born teenagers (Figure 4).[8] Even though foreign-born teens are more likely to be married, both marital and nonmarital birth rates are higher for foreign-born teens. Foreign-born teens and U.S.-born teens experienced substantial declines in birth rates during the 1990s. The steep decline in birth rates during the 1990s is partly a return to levels seen before the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Table 1. Percentage of Teen Mothers Never Married, California, 1970–2000

Age	Year			
	1970	1980	1990	2000
15	60	72	80	
16	48	65	74	
17	44	54	73	
18	32	45	65	
19	17	37	55	
15–19	29	45	63	78

Sources: Author's calculations based on decennial Censuses and the 2000 Census Supplementary Survey.

Notes: Teen mothers are defined as those teens who have ever given birth. The sample size for 2000 is very small for California and includes only 46 teens who had ever given birth. Nationwide, the sample includes 402 teens who had ever given birth; 76 percent of them were unmarried.

Table 2. Percentage of Births to Unmarried Mothers by Age Group and Race/Ethnicity, California, 1997 and 1999

	1997			1999
	Age 15–17	Age 18–19	Age 15–19	Age 15–19
Total	83	67	74	76
American Indian	86	74	78	84
Asian and Pacific Islander	77	65	69	71
African American	93	86	89	91
Latina	82	65	72	75
White	86	66	72	74

Sources: Author's tabulations of DHS data for 1997; DHS publication for 1999 (DHS, 2002).

sharp rise of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Thus, although much has been made of declining teen birth rates in the 1990s, perhaps the real anomaly that calls out for explanation is the sharp rise in teen birth rates that occurred among foreign-born teens during the late 1980s and early 1990s (a phenomenon discussed below).

For both foreign-born and U.S.-born teens, birth rates are much higher for older teens (ages 17 to 19) than for younger teens. However, *differences* in birth rates between foreign-born and U.S.-born teens are much greater for older teens (Figure 5). Tremendous increases in teen birth rates during the late 1980s and early 1990s and large declines since then were experienced by older foreign-born teens but not by U.S.-born teens. Declines in nonmarital teen birth rates are less dramatic, although exact figures are not known.

Teen Birth Rates by Race/Ethnicity in California

Teen birth rates vary substantially by racial and ethnic group. Latinas, African Americans, and American Indians have relatively high teen birth rates; Asians and whites have relatively low teen birth rates. Latinas are the largest

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Table 3. Number and Percentage of Births to Unmarried Teen Mothers by Age Group, Race/Ethnicity, and Nativity, California, 1997

	Age 15–17	Age 18–19	Age 15–19	No.
Foreign-Born				
Total foreign-born	73	56	62	18,814
Asian and Pacific Islander	73	59	64	1,678
African American	91	74	79	108
Latina	74	57	63	16,569
White	49	29	33	458
U.S.-Born				
Total U.S.-born	88	73	79	40,951
American Indian	86	74	79	513
Asian and Pacific Islander	81	75	78	1,040
African American	93	87	89	6,183
Latina	87	72	79	21,246
White	86	67	73	11,969

Note: The number of births to 15- to 17-year-old foreign-born whites and foreign-born blacks is very small (97 and 32, respectively).

Latinas, African Americans, and American Indians have relatively high teen birth rates; Asians and whites have relatively low teen birth rates.

group of teens (41 percent of all teens) and have the highest birth rates of the major racial/ethnic groups; two of every three babies born to teens in California are born to Latinas. Whites constitute 39 percent of teens and account for 18 percent of teen births; African Americans constitute 7 percent of teens and account for 9 percent of teen births; Asians and Pacific Islanders constitute 12 percent of teens and 4 percent of teen births; and American Indians constitute less than 1 percent of teens and teen births.

Teen birth rates have declined for every racial and ethnic group in California. For every group except Latinas, teen birth rates are at the lowest levels in at least two decades. Latinas now have the highest teen birth rates in California (Figure 6). Before 1990, African American teens had the highest birth rates in the state. Since then, however, teen birth rates for African Americans have fallen by almost half, whereas rates for Latinas did not begin to decline appreciably until 1995. The relatively high level of teen birth rates among Latinas is partly attributable to foreign-born teens, as discussed in the next section.

The large racial and ethnic groups of Figure 6 mask a great deal of underlying variation, particularly among Asian subgroups. For example, Laotian and Hmong teens are much more likely to be mothers than Chinese, Asian Indian, and Japanese teens (Figure 7).[9] Even though marriage rates are relatively high among Laotian and Hmong teen mothers, nonmarital teen birth rates are still much higher for Laotian and Hmong teens than for other Asian subgroups.

Teen Birth Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity in California

Even among teens of the same racial/ethnic group, levels of teen childbearing and patterns of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

change over time are quite different for foreign-born versus U.S.-born teens (Figure 8). The most dramatic increase in teen birth rates from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s occurred among foreign-born Latinas.

What caused the dramatic increase in teen fertility rates among foreign-born Latinas? The timing of the increase suggests that it was related to the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA). Under this act, large numbers of formerly unauthorized immigrants were given legal immigration status in the United States. Most of these immigrants were young men, and many were joined in the United States by their wives or girlfriends upon receiving amnesty.[10] One result of this union was an increase in births, not only among teens but also among older Latinas.[11] Declines since then reflect the unique nature of the event and thus a return to a level of teen fertility that is more consistent with the long-term historical average for foreign-born Latinas.

Other groups also experienced increases in teen fertility during the 1980s and declines in the 1990s, although the magnitude was nowhere near as large as for foreign-born Latinas (Table 5). Increases were notable, although less than half as large in absolute terms, for U.S.-born Latinas and African Americans. The cause of those increases is unknown.

Table 4. Age Difference Between Fathers and Teen Mothers, California, 2000

	Average Age Difference (in Years)	Percentage of Fathers Age 21 or Older
All teen mothers	3.6	51
Nativity		
U.S.-born	3.0	45
Foreign-born	4.7	64
Marital status[a]		
Unmarried	3.3	45
Married	4.5	66
Race/ethnicity		
Latino	3.7	53
White	3.4	51
Asian and Pacific Islander	3.3	47
African American	3.0	42
American Indian	3.4	48
Age of mother		
15	3.8	21
16	3.5	28
17	3.5	39
18	3.5	52
19	3.6	66

Source: Author's calculations based on California vital statistics records and population estimates consistent with the 2000 Census.
Notes: Only cases with known father's age are included. In 2000, father's age was unknown in 17 percent of teen births.
[a] Data on marital status are from 1997.

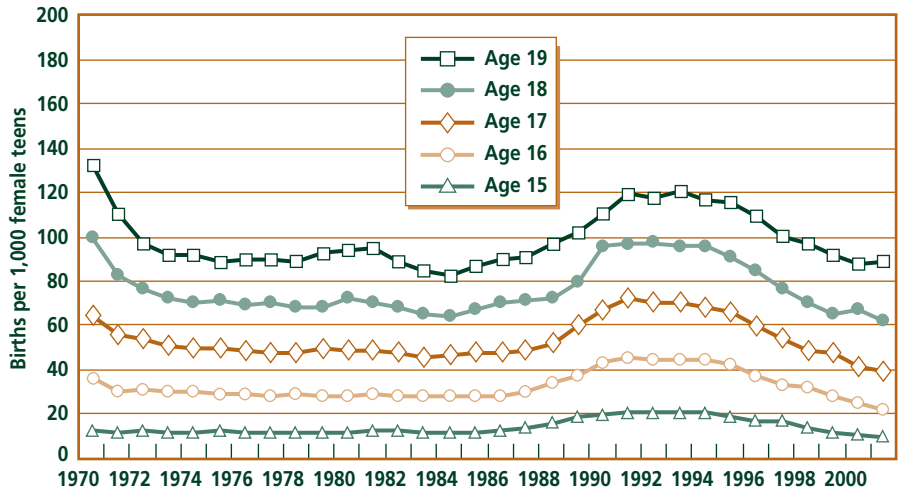
Overall, a substantial share (43 percent) of the decline in teen birth rates in California can be attributed to declines in foreign-born Latina teen birth rates.[12] Nonetheless, as we saw in Figure 8, declines in teen fertility in the 1990s have been noteworthy for other groups as well, even for Asians and whites who did not experience large increases in the 1980s. Among U.S.-born teens, African Americans experienced the largest declines. In the 1980s, African American teens had birth rates far higher than any other group; by 2000, their rates had fallen to about the same level as for U.S.-born Latinas.

Teen Birth Rates by Region and County

Teen birth rates in California also vary across California's regions and counties. Some, but not all, of this variation can be explained by differences in the

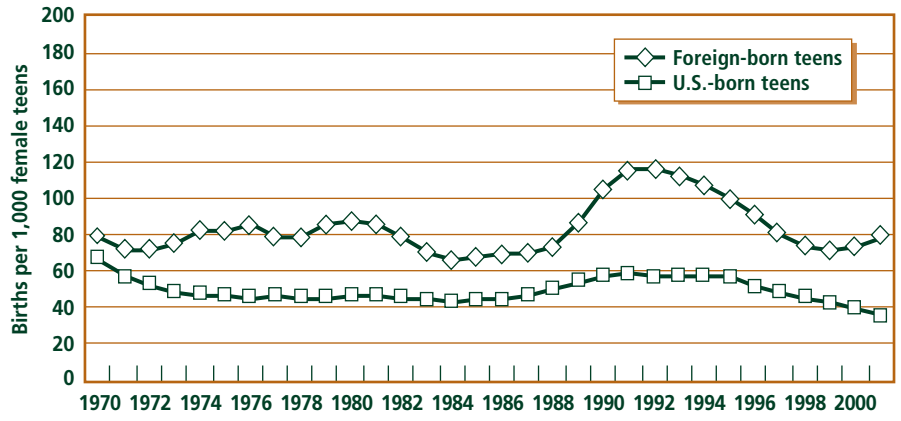
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Figure 3. Teen Birth Rates by Single Year of Age, California, 1970–2001



Source: Author's calculations based on California vital statistics records and population estimates consistent with the 2000 Census.

Figure 4. Teen Birth Rates by Nativity, California, 1970–2001



Source: Author's calculations based on California vital statistics records and population estimates consistent with the 2000 Census.
Note: Rates are for teens ages 15 through 19.

composition of teens across California. In particular, counties with large Latina populations tend to have relatively high teen birth rates.

The San Joaquin Valley has the highest teen birth rates of any region in California (Table 6). Teen birth rates in the San Joaquin Valley are more than twice as high as those in the Bay Area and the Sierras—the regions with the lowest teen birth rates in 2000. These high rates are not just the result of the composition of the population of the San Joaquin Valley, which has a relatively high proportion of Latinas. This region has the highest teen birth rates for each of the four largest racial/ethnic groups in California (Latinas, whites, Asians, and African Americans). Teen birth rates tend to be higher in the southern part of the valley, with Tulare and Kings Counties having the highest rates in the state and Kern County ranking fourth highest. In each of these counties, and in Fresno and Madera Counties, 10 percent of Latina teens gave birth in 2000.[13] In contrast, Latina teen birth rates are much lower in the North Coast and Mountain region and in the Sierras, where there are relatively low Latina populations and few immigrants. As noted above, teen birth rates for whites are also higher in the San Joaquin Valley than in any other region of the state, although Yuba, Colusa, and Tehama Counties in the Upper Sacramento Val-

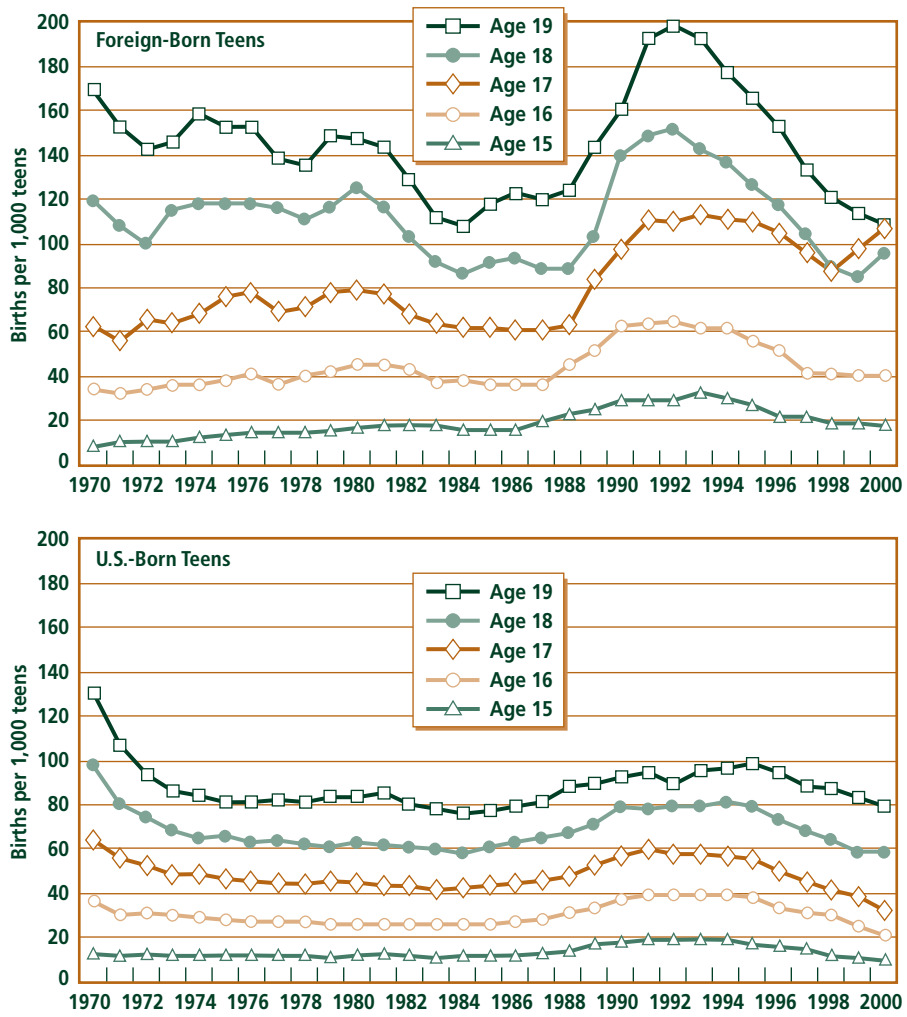
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ley also have high rates. The Bay Area has the lowest teen fertility rates for whites.

Asian teen fertility rates vary more than those for other groups, primarily because of the diverse subgroups within the Asian category. Counties and regions with large numbers of Southeast Asians—particularly Hmongs, Miens, and Laotians—have relatively high Asian teen fertility rates. Because of large proportions of Southeast Asians, the Upper Sacramento Valley and the San Joaquin Valley have the highest Asian teen birth rates in California. In Yuba County, where 79 percent of teen births in 2000 were to Hmongs, more than one in every ten female Asian teenagers gave birth. In contrast, teen birth rates among Asians in the South Coast were the lowest of any racial/ethnic group in any region, with fewer than one in 100 Asian teens in the South Coast giving birth in 2000.

Among African Americans, teen birth rates were greatest in the San Joaquin Valley. Rates were lowest in the Upper Sacramento Valley, a region with a small African American population, and in the Central Coast. Teen birth rates for American Indians were high in rural areas of the state—the Sierras and the North Coast and Mountain region. Rates were lower in urban areas, especially the South Coast and San Diego. The Central Coast, with few American

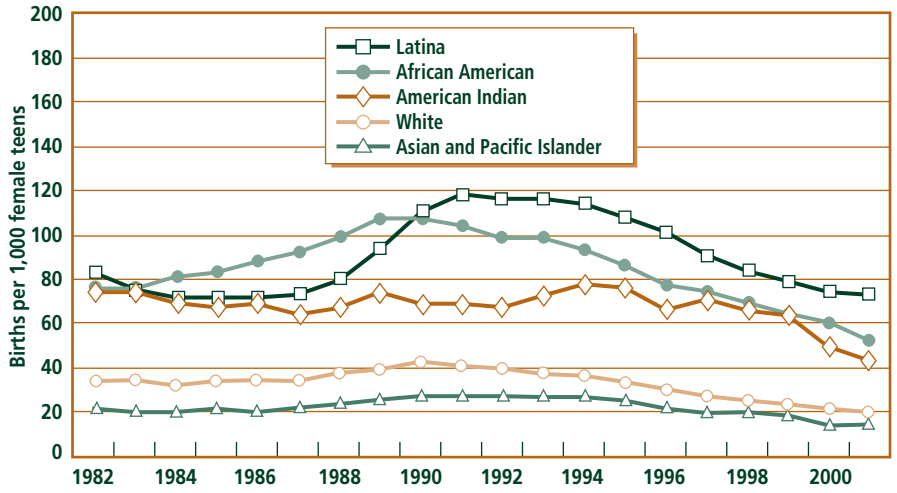
Figure 5. Teen Birth Rates by Nativity and Single Year of Age of Mother, California, 1970–2000



Source: Author's calculations based on California vital statistics records and population estimates consistent with the 2000 Census.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Figure 6. Teen Birth Rates by Race/Ethnicity, California, 1982–2001



Source: Author's calculations based on California vital statistics records and population estimates consistent with the 2000 Census.
Note: Rates are for teens ages 15 through 19.

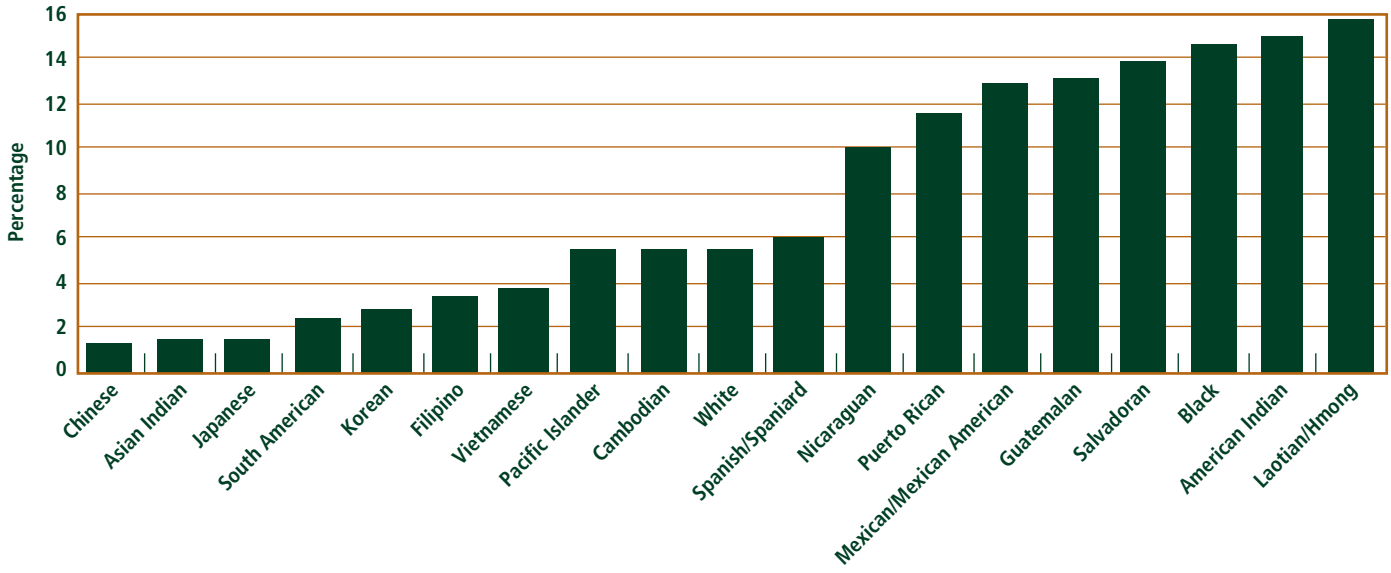
Indians, experienced the lowest teen birth rates among this group.

Among urban regions of the state, the Inland Empire has high teen birth rates. In 2000, teen birth rates in the Inland Empire were greater than the comparable state rates for every racial/ethnic group except American Indians. The rate for whites in the Inland Empire was over 50 percent higher than the state rate.

Conclusion

Declines in teen birth rates have been more dramatic in California than in almost any other

Figure 7. Percentage of Teens Ages 15 Through 19 with at Least One Child Ever Born by Racial/Ethnic Subgroup, 1990



Source: Author's calculations based on 1990 Census data.
Notes: Only groups with 100 or more females ages 15 through 19 are included. Chinese includes Taiwanese. Pacific Islander includes Hawaiian. Mexican/Mexican American includes Chicana.

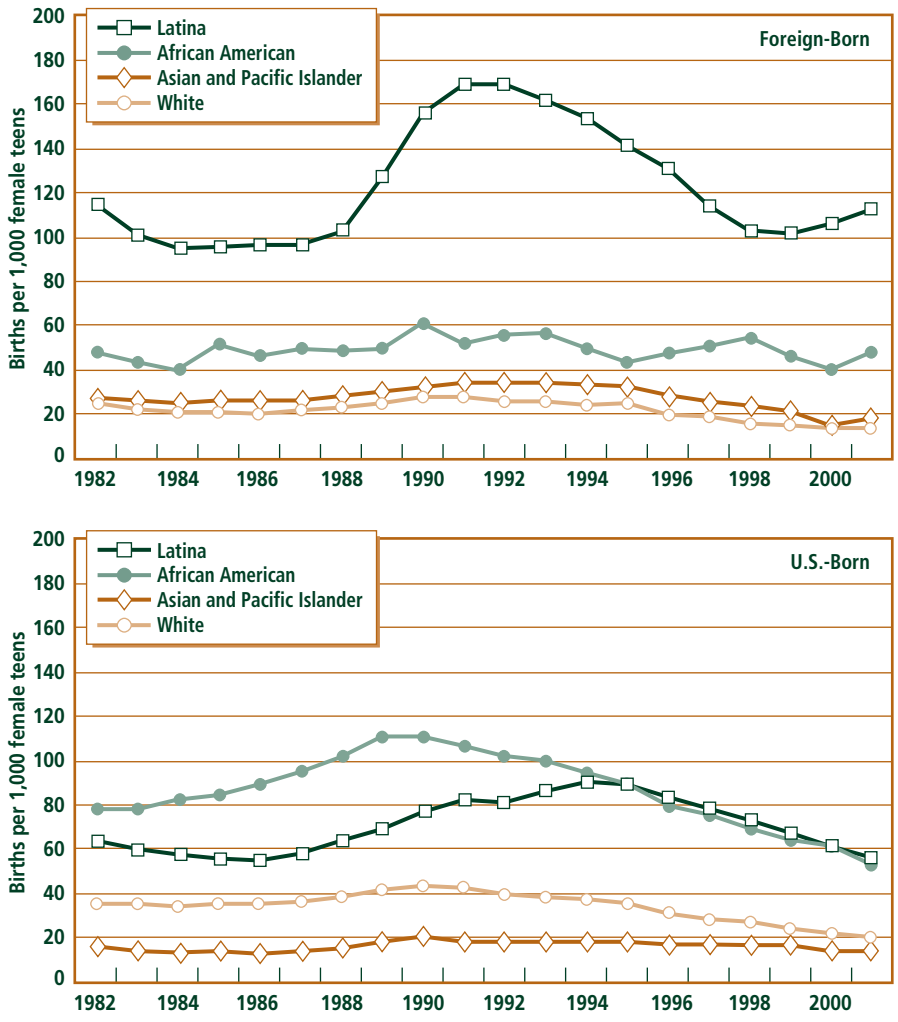
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Declines in teen birth rates have been more dramatic in California than in almost any other state.

state. Of course, California's earlier high rates created a lot of room for improvement. In 1991, California's teen birth rates were among the highest in the nation; by 2000, the state's rates were lower than the national average. These declines were experienced by U.S.-born as well as by foreign-born teens and by the major racial/ethnic groups in the state. A large share of the state's declining teen birth rate can be attributed to declines among foreign-born Latinas.

Declines in teen fertility rates during the 1990s could be attributed to any number of factors, including decline in sexual activity, increase in contraceptive use, fears of sexually transmitted diseases (including AIDS), intervention programs, welfare reform, the strong economy, and demographic changes in the teen population. One study suggests that one-fourth of the national decline in teen birth rates was due to increases in abstinence and three-fourths to more effective contraceptive use (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1999). Other studies suggest different proportions and note that assignment of the relative role of various

Figure 8. Teen Birth Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, California, 1982–2001



Source: Author's calculations based on California vital statistics records and population estimates consistent with the 2000 Census.
Note: Rates are for teens ages 15 through 19.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Table 5. Percentage and Absolute Change in Teen Birth Rates by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, California

	Foreign-Born		U.S.-Born	
	1980s to Late 1980s/ Early 1990s Peak	Late 1980s/ Early 1990s Peak to 2000	1980s to Late 1980s/ Early 1990s Peak	Late 1980s/ Early 1990s Peak to 2000
Percentage Change in Rate per 1,000 Female Teens				
White	39	–50	26	–48
Latina	79	–38	64	–32
Asian and Pacific Islander	33	–55	52	–34
African American	50	–3	41	–45
Absolute Change in Rate per 1,000 Female Teens				
White	8	–14	9	–21
Latina	75	–64	35	–29
Asian and Pacific Islander	9	–19	7	–7
African American	20	–20	32	–50

Source: Author's calculations based on California vital statistics records and population estimates consistent with the 2000 Census.

Because of the state's unique demography, policies to reduce teen birth rates in California might need to be different, or at least targeted differently, from those in the rest of the nation.

causal factors is difficult.[14] Nationally, teen pregnancy rates have fallen even more than birth rates, as the incidence of abortion has decreased (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1999).[15]

Despite recent declines, foreign-born teens—especially those from Latin America and some Southeast Asian groups—have very high birth rates. Whites and most Asian groups in California have teen birth rates that are lower than those of New Hampshire—the state with the lowest overall teen birth rates—and Latinas in California have rates higher than overall rates in any state, higher even than rates in Mississippi. Geographically, the San Joaquin Valley has the highest teen birth rate in the state—over twice the rate of the Bay Area.

Because of the state's unique demography, policies to reduce teen birth rates in California might need to be different, or at least targeted differently, from those in the rest of the nation, and might even need to vary within the state. Intervention programs should accommodate the different languages and cultural contexts of teenage groups in the state. For example, high birth rates among Laotian and Hmong teens might call for a different approach than high birth rates among African American teens. Likewise, an informed program for Latina teens should recognize that tremendous declines in teen birth rates among Latina teens stem at least in part from the receding effects of IRCA.

Finally, more research is necessary to understand declines in teen birth rates and the role of intervention programs. In California, such research needs to consider the diversity of the state's teen population. The trends and patterns of teen childbearing in California, as shown in this issue, highlight some of the demographic and contextual factors that may be important in designing and evaluating prevention policies and programs. ◆

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Table 6. Teen Birth Rates by Region and County, California, 2000 (births per 1,000 female teens, ages 15–19)

Region/County	Total	Latina	White	Asian and Pacific Islander	African American	American Indian
State	**46.8**	**75.3**	**22.4**	**14.4**	**60.8**	**50.4**
North Coast and Mountain	**36.3**	**62.8**	**31.4**	**26.4**	**(a)**	**73.3**
Del Norte	61.4	(a)	66.3	(a)	(a)	(a)
Humboldt	31.5	68.3	25.4	48.0	(a)	70.8
Lake	52.5	52.1	49.8	(a)	(a)	(a)
Lassen	32.0	(a)	29.5	(a)	(a)	(a)
Mendocino	47.3	75.4	35.3	(a)	(a)	101.9
Modoc	43.9	(a)	34.5	(a)	(a)	(a)
Nevada	22.2	46.8	20.9	(a)	(a)	(a)
Plumas	25.1	(a)	30.0	(a)	(a)	(a)
Sierra	(a)	(a)	(a)	(a)	(a)	(a)
Siskiyou	32.0	(a)	30.3	(a)	(a)	(a)
Trinity	26.4	(a)	26.1	(a)	(a)	(a)
Central Valley						
Upper Sacramento Valley	**42.3**	**69.6**	**36.3**	**56.2**	**50.0**	**53.5**
Butte	28.2	51.2	23.6	49.2	(a)	(a)
Colusa	70.4	79.5	58.3	(a)	(a)	(a)
Glenn	50.8	69.5	40.0	(a)	(a)	(a)
Shasta	35.7	61.4	33.4	55.6	(a)	(a)
Sutter	45.6	75.8	41.1	16.4	(a)	(a)
Tehama	63.6	95.7	58.0	(a)	(a)	(a)
Yuba	74.2	77.2	71.9	119.4	(a)	(a)
Sacramento Metro	**37.2**	**68.6**	**26.3**	**32.7**	**73.9**	**49.9**
El Dorado	23.6	63.3	19.3	(a)	(a)	(a)
Placer	20.7	63.4	16.0	(a)	(a)	(a)
Sacramento	44.9	73.3	33.1	41.5	77.6	59.2
Yolo	23.7	54.7	17.4	6.8	9.8	(a)
San Joaquin Valley	**68.5**	**95.8**	**41.9**	**52.8**	**91.0**	**42.2**
Fresno	70.4	99.0	32.3	55.5	92.5	44.1
Kern	74.0	103.9	48.6	33.0	89.9	23.7
Kings	78.3	102.9	46.4	48.2	123.9	(a)
Madera	71.8	106.1	34.8	(a)	(a)	(a)
Merced	66.2	83.6	46.9	64.0	69.6	(a)
San Joaquin	61.1	91.0	38.6	55.8	100.9	56.9
Stanislaus	54.9	78.7	42.6	30.5	70.7	32.5
Tulare	78.5	98.2	48.4	71.4	108.4	44.4

Continued on next page

(a) Rates not calculated for base populations of less than 200.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Table 6. continued

Region/County	Total	Latina	White	Asian and Pacific Islander	African American	American Indian
State	**46.8**	**75.3**	**22.4**	**14.4**	**60.8**	**50.4**
Sierras	**32.5**	**63.8**	**28.3**	**(a)**	**(a)**	**80.0**
Alpine	(a)	(a)	(a)	(a)	(a)	(a)
Amador	25.7	(a)	22.7	(a)	(a)	(a)
Calaveras	30.4	(a)	27.6	(a)	(a)	(a)
Inyo	46.2	(a)	39.6	(a)	(a)	(a)
Mariposa	44.3	(a)	39.1	(a)	(a)	(a)
Mono	48.3	(a)	26.3	(a)	(a)	(a)
Tuolumne	25.9	(a)	25.6	(a)	(a)	(a)
Bay Area	**33.4**	**74.9**	**14.3**	**14.0**	**60.9**	**43.8**
Alameda	37.7	76.8	15.6	15.3	67.1	28.8
Contra Costa	30.8	64.3	14.6	15.4	63.3	45.7
Marin	14.5	67.1	4.2	3.5	(a)	(a)
Napa	31.6	75.1	13.2	18.6	(a)	(a)
San Francisco	28.0	65.2	8.7	8.9	74.0	(a)
San Mateo	30.9	68.3	10.5	14.9	50.4	(a)
Santa Clara	34.9	82.6	11.2	13.1	30.4	34.6
Solano	42.9	71.8	34.4	26.0	62.4	(a)
Sonoma	29.1	78.9	15.1	17.7	29.4	74.6
Central Coast	**41.7**	**80.1**	**15.2**	**20.1**	**43.7**	**18.1**
Monterey	59.6	85.6	22.9	29.9	42.3	(a)
San Benito	41.9	61.1	15.1	(a)	(a)	(a)
San Luis Obispo	25.1	60.8	17.4	11.6	(a)	(a)
Santa Barbara	40.5	82.8	11.4	18.7	48.0	(a)
Santa Cruz	33.5	78.3	12.0	14.5	(a)	(a)
South Coast	**47.3**	**76.0**	**15.0**	**9.3**	**56.5**	**19.5**
Los Angeles	50.2	74.8	15.4	9.5	57.6	20.6
Orange	38.6	80.7	14.2	8.8	39.8	9.9
Ventura	42.3	80.3	15.4	8.1	41.3	31.9
Inland Empire	**56.2**	**79.9**	**35.5**	**17.1**	**70.6**	**37.6**
Riverside	55.3	82.8	33.8	15.7	64.1	31.4
San Bernardino	57.0	77.4	37.0	18.5	74.6	43.3
San Diego	**44.9**	**81.7**	**20.0**	**18.7**	**64.7**	**22.4**
Imperial	73.5	83.1	35.2	(a)	(a)	(a)
San Diego	43.2	81.5	19.7	18.8	65.0	24.6

Source: Author's calculations based on California vital statistics records and population estimates consistent with the 2000 Census.
(a) Rates not calculated for base populations of less than 200.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Notes

[1] The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) report, *A National Strategy to Prevent Out-of-Wedlock Teen Pregnancies*, states, "Abstinence and personal responsibility must be the primary messages of prevention programs" (U.S. HHS, 2002). The 1996 welfare reform act (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, TANF) provided annual bonuses totaling $100 million to states that reduced nonmarital births (without increasing abortion rates) and an additional $102 million for "abstinence-only" education programs (Fremstad et al., 2002). Provisions of the reauthorization of TANF are currently being debated in Washington, with some versions continuing funding for abstinence-only education and others allowing comprehensive sex education or abstinence-first prevention strategies (Fremstad et al., 2002).

[2] In California, an evaluation of the state's Adolescent Sibling Pregnancy Prevention Program, a program designed to prevent pregnancy in the siblings of pregnant teens and teen mothers, found substantially lower rates of pregnancy among those in the program than in a comparison group (East and Kiernan, 2001). However, a very small proportion of California teens participate in the program.

[3] Nationwide in 1994, among 15- to 19-year-olds, 78 percent of pregnancies and 66 percent of births were unintended. (A birth is said to be unintended if the pregnancy that led to the birth was unintended. Some unintended pregnancies end in abortion or miscarriage.) These percentages are much higher than for pregnant women of other ages. Among women age 20 or older, 44 percent of pregnancies and 26 percent of births were unintended (Henshaw, 1998).

[4] For example, Hotz et al. (1999) find that pregnant teens who give birth are no worse off than pregnant teens who involuntarily miscarry, indicating that it is selection first into teen pregnancy and second into deciding to have the baby (even if miscarried) that produces the poor outcomes observed in other studies.

[5] All teen births and teen birth rates in this report are for teenagers ages 15 through 19.

[6] Exact figures by marital status are not available because DHS did not collect information on marital status until 1997. However, we know from Census and survey data that the proportion of teen mothers who are married has declined consistently across the decades.

[7] These figures are based on Census and survey data. Census 2000 data (the Public Use Microdata Series file) are not yet available to develop similar percentages based on the 2000 Census. The 2000 estimates reported here are based on the 2000 Census Supplementary Survey. The sample size for 2000 is very small for California (see the note to Table 1).

[8] Despite higher teen birth rates among foreign-born teens, a large majority of teen births (about two-thirds in 2000) are to U.S.-born teens because they constitute such a large share of the population of teens in California (80 percent in 2000). In 1970, U.S.-born teens accounted for 93 percent of all teen births and 94 percent of all teenagers in the state.

[9] Figure 7 displays data from the 1990 Census. Detailed results from the 2000 Census are not yet available.

[10] About 1.6 million people applied for amnesty in California—over half of all who applied in the nation.

[11] Increases in teen fertility rates for foreign-born Latinas were concentrated among older teens, both married and unmarried. See Johnson et al. (2001) for a review of fertility rates for women of all childbearing ages in California.

[12] In other words, if teen birth rates for foreign-born Latinas did not decrease, overall teen birth rates in California would have fallen much less.

[13] The proportion of Latina teen mothers who are foreign-born and the proportion who are married is about the same or lower in these counties than in the state as a whole.

[14] See McElroy and Moore (1997), for example.

[15] California does not report data on pregnancy rates or abortion rates because the state law requiring such reporting has been enjoined (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2002).

Bibliography

Alan Guttmacher Institute, "Why Is Teenage Pregnancy Declining? The Roles of Abstinence, Sexual Activity, and Contraceptive Use," *Occasional Report*, New York, 1999.

Alan Guttmacher Institute, *State Policies in Brief: Abortion Reporting Requirements*, New York, 2002.

California Department of Health Services, *Vital Statistics of California, 1999*, Sacramento, California, 2002.

DiCenso, Alba, Gordon Guyatt, A. Willan, and L. Griffith, "Interventions to Reduce Unintended Pregnancies Among Adolescents: Systematic Review of Randomised Controlled Trials," *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 324, No. 7351, June 15, 2002, p. 1426.

East, Patricia, and Elizabeth Kiernan, *California's Adolescent Sibling Pregnancy Prevention Program: Evaluating the Impact of Pregnancy Prevention Services to the Siblings of Pregnant and Parenting Teens*, California Department of Health Services, Maternal and Child Health Branch, Sacramento, California, 2001.

Fremstad, Shawn, Zoe Neuberger, Nisha Patel, Steve Savner, Mark Greenberg, and Vicki Turetsky, *Summary Comparison of TANF Reauthorization Provisions: Bills Passed by Senate Finance Committee and the House of Representatives and Related Proposals*, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Center for Law and Social Policy, Publication No. 02-62, Washington, D.C., August 9, 2002.

Frost, Jennifer J., and Selene Oslak, "Teenager Pregnancy Intentions and Decisions: A Study of Young Women in California Choosing to Give Birth," *Occasional Report*, Alan Guttmacher Institute, New York, 1999.

Henshaw, S. K., "Unintended Pregnancy in the United States," *Family Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1998.

Hoffman, Saul D., "Teenage Childbearing Is Not So Bad After All . . . Or Is It? A Review of the New Literature," *Family Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 30, No. 5, 1998.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hotz, V. Joseph, Susan Williams McElroy, and Seth G. Sanders, "Teenage Childbearing and Its Life Cycle Consequences: Exploiting a Natural Experiment," Working Paper 7397, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1999.

Johnson, Hans P., Laura Hill, and Mary Heim, "New Trends in Newborns: Fertility Rates and Patterns in California," *California Counts*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Public Policy Institute of California, San Francisco, California, 2001.

Maynard, Rebecca A., ed., *Kids Having Kids: Economic Costs and Social Consequences of Teen Pregnancy*, Urban Institute Press, Washington, D.C., 1997.

McElroy, Susan W., and Kristin A. Moore, "Trends over Time in Teenage Pregnancy and Childbearing: The Critical Changes," in Rebecca A. Maynard, ed., *Kids Having Kids: Economic Costs and Social Consequences of Teen Pregnancy*, Urban Institute Press, Washington, D.C., 1997.

Ruggeles, Steven, Matthew Sobek, et al., *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 2.0*, Historical Census Projects, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1997.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *A National Strategy to Prevent Teen Pregnancy: Annual Report 1999–2000*, 2000, Washington, D.C., available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/teenp/ann-rpt00/.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "The National Strategy to Prevent Out-of-Wedlock Teen Pregnancies," 2002, Washington, D.C., available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/teenp/strategy.htm and http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/teenp/intro.htm.

Board of Directors

Raymond L. Watson, Chair
Vice Chairman of the Board
The Irvine Company

William K. Coblentz
Partner
Coblentz, Patch, Duffy & Bass, LLP

Edward K. Hamilton
Chairman
Hamilton, Rabinovitz & Alschuler, Inc.

Walter B. Hewlett
Director
Center for Computer Assisted Research in the Humanities

David W. Lyon
President and CEO
Public Policy Institute of California

Cheryl White Mason
Chief, Civil Liability Management
Office of the City Attorney
Los Angeles, California

Arjay Miller
Dean Emeritus
Graduate School of Business
Stanford University

Ki Suh Park
Design and Managing Partner
Gruen Associates

A. Alan Post
Former State Legislative Analyst
State of California

Constance L. Rice
Co-Director
The Advancement Project

Thomas C. Sutton
Chairman & CEO
Pacific Life Insurance Company

Cynthia A. Telles
Department of Psychiatry
UCLA School of Medicine

Carol Whiteside
President
Great Valley Center

Harold M. Williams
President Emeritus
The J. Paul Getty Trust
and
Of Counsel
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP

The Public Policy Institute of California is a private, nonprofit research organization established in 1994 with an endowment from William R. Hewlett. The Institute conducts independent, objective, nonpartisan research on the economic, social, and political issues affecting Californians. The Institute's goal is to raise public awareness of these issues and give elected representatives and other public officials in California a more informed basis for developing policies and programs. PPIC does not take or support positions on any ballot measure or state and federal legislation nor does it endorse or support any political parties or candidates for public office.

PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA
500 Washington Street, Suite 800 • San Francisco, California 94111
Telephone: (415) 291-4400 • Fax: (415) 291-4401 • www.ppic.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Public Policy Institute *of* California

California Counts **Maternity Before Maturity**

Recent issues of

California Counts

POPULATION TRENDS AND PROFILES

California's Young Children: Demographic, Social, and Economic Conditions

Who's Your Neighbor? Residential Segregation and Diversity in California

A State of Diversity: Demographic Trends in California's Regions

The Linguistic Landscape of California Schools

At Home and in School: Racial and Ethnic Gaps in Educational Preparedness

Check One or More . . . Mixed Race and Ethnicity in California

Graying in the Golden State: Demographic and Economic Trends of Older Californians

are available free of charge on PPIC's website
www.ppic.org

PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA
500 Washington Street, Suite 800
San Francisco, California 94111

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BRISBANE, CA
PERMIT #83

In This Issue

Mothers So Young

Teen Birth Rates in California

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED